

IN THE CLAIMS

For the convenience of the Examiner, all claims have been presented whether or not an amendment has been made. The claims have been amended as follows:

1. **(Currently Amended)** A computer-implemented method of providing merchandise return labels for enabling a customer to ship a package containing one or more items previously acquired from a merchant during a unique transaction, comprising the steps of:

accessing item data representing at least one detail about the item;

accessing transaction data representing at least one detail about the transaction associated with the item;

accessing customer data representing at least one detail about a customer associated with the transaction;

accessing package data representing at least one detail about the package in which the item is expected to be shipped;

using a computer operated by the merchant from whom the item was acquired or a specialized returns center associated with the merchant to process returns to correlate ~~correlating~~ the item data, transaction data, customer data, and package data, with a set of stored business rules to determine coding to be printed on a return shipping label; wherein the set of stored business rules specify how packages are to be shipped from the customer to a returns center and represent guidelines for determining choice of carrier, shipping destination, shipping rate, and package disposition for shipment from the customer to the returns center;

in response to correlating the item data, transaction data, customer data, and package data with the set of stored business rules specifying how packages are to be shipped, **using the computer operated by the merchant from whom the item was acquired or the specialized returns center associated with the merchant to generate a third-party** ~~generating a~~ machine readable code for the return shipping label for shipment from the customer to the returns center, wherein the data ~~represents~~ **represented by the third-party machine readable code includes** the results of the correlating step and represents at least a shipping origin of the package and identification of the transaction; and

in response to correlating the item data, transaction data, customer data, and package data with the set of stored business rules specifying how packages are to be shipped from the customer to the returns center, using the computer operated by the merchant from whom the item was acquired or the specialized returns center associated with the merchant to format formatting the return shipping label, such that the return shipping label contains the third-party machine readable code and complies with shipping label specifications of the choice of carrier, the third-party machine readable code in addition to a carrier-specified machine readable code also present on the shipping label.

2. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the item data identifies an item type.

3. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the item data identifies an item value.

4. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the transaction data is a transaction identifier.

5. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the transaction data is a transaction date.

6. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the customer data represents a shipping origin.

7. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the customer data represents customer preferences.

8. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the customer data identifies a payee of shipping costs.

9. (Original) The method of Claim 1, wherein the package data represents package weight.

10. **(Original)** The method of Claim 1, wherein the package data represents package size.

11. **(Original)** The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of accessing shipping rate data.

12. **(Original)** The method of Claim 1, further comprising the step of accessing carrier center location data.

13. **(Original)** The method of Claim 12, wherein the carrier center location data represents bulk mail center data.

14. **(Currently Amended)** Software for providing merchandise return labels for enabling a customer to ship a package containing one or more items previously acquired from a merchant during a unique transaction, the software embodied in a memory and comprising programming operable when executed by a computer to:

access item data representing at least one detail about the item;

access transaction data representing at least one detail about the transaction associated with the item;

access customer data representing at least one detail about a customer associated with the transaction;

access package data representing at least one detail about the package in which the item is expected to be shipped;

correlate the item data, transaction data, customer data, and package data, with a set of stored business rules to determine coding to be printed on a return shipping label; wherein the set of stored business rules specify how packages are to be shipped from the customer to the returns center and represent guidelines for determining choice of carrier, shipping destination, shipping rate, and package disposition for shipment from the customer to the returns center;

in response to correlating the item data, transaction data, customer data, and package data with the set of stored business rules specifying how packages are to be shipped, generate a **third-party** machine readable code for the return shipping label for shipment from the customer to the returns center, wherein the data ~~represents~~ **represented by the third-party machine readable code includes** the results of the correlating step and represents at least a shipping origin of the package and identification of the transaction; and

in response to correlating the item data, transaction data, customer data, and package data with the set of stored business rules specifying how packages are to be shipped from the customer to the returns center, format the return shipping label, such that the return shipping label contains the **third-party** machine readable code and complies with shipping label specifications of the selected shipping carrier, **the third-party machine readable code in addition to a carrier-specified machine readable code also present on the shipping label.**

15. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the programming is operable to access at least one of the group of item data, customer data, transaction data, or product data, via a remote data communications link.

16. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the programming is further operable to access shipping rate data.

17. **(Currently Amended)** The software of Claim 14, further comprising the step of accessing carrier center location data.

18. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the carrier center location data represents bulk mail center data.

19. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the item data identifies an item type.

20. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the item data identifies an item value.

21. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the transaction data is a transaction identifier.

22. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the transaction data is a transaction date.

23. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14 wherein the customer data represents a shipping origin.

24. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the customer data represents customer preferences.

25. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the customer data identifies a payee of shipping costs.

26. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the package data represents package weight.

27. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 14, wherein the package data represents package size.

28. **(Currently Amended)** Software for providing merchandise return labels for enabling a customer to ship a package containing one or more items previously acquired from a merchant during a unique transaction, the software embodied in a memory and comprising programming operable when executed by a computer to:

access item data representing at least one detail about the item;

access transaction data representing at least one detail about the transaction associated with the item;

correlate the item data and transaction data with a set of stored business rules to determine coding to be printed on a shipping label; wherein the set of stored business rules specify how packages are to be shipped from the customer to the returns center and represent guidelines for determining a selected shipping carrier, a shipping destination, and a shipping class or rate for shipment from the customer to the returns center;

in response to correlating the item data and transaction data with the set of stored business rules specifying how packages are to be shipped, generate a **third-party** machine readable code for the return shipping label for shipment from the customer to the returns center, wherein the data **represents represented by the third-party machine readable code includes** the results of the correlating step and represents at least a shipping origin of the package and identification of the transaction; and

in response to correlating the item data and transaction data with the set of stored business rules specifying how packages are to be shipped from the customer to the returns center, format the return shipping label, such that the return shipping label contains the **third-party** machine readable code and complies with shipping label specifications of the selected shipping carrier, **the third-party machine readable code in addition to a carrier-specified machine readable code also present on the shipping label.**

29. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 28, wherein the programming is further operable to access customer data representing at least one detail about a customer associated with the transaction, to further correlate customer data with the business rules.

30. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 28, wherein the programming is further operable to access package data representing at least one detail about the package in which the item is expected to be shipped, and to further correlate package data with the business rules.

31. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 28, wherein the shipping parameters further may comprise choice of carrier.

32. **(Previously Presented)** The software of Claim 28, wherein the shipping parameters further may comprise package disposition.